

South Carolina Academy of Authors Announces 2009 Inductee Celebration

Contributed by Curtis Rogers
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The South Carolina Academy of Authors will celebrate writers Kwame Dawes, Susan Ludvigson, and Carrie Allen McCray Nickens, inducting the three into the state's literary hall of fame on April 25, 2009. The three will be honored in the April ceremony in Columbia. All three are poets, and April is National Poetry Month, established in 1996 by the Academy of American Poets to increase attention to poetry.

The ceremony will be held in Capstone House's Campus Room on the University of South Carolina campus in Columbia. Doors will open at 7 p.m. The ceremony will start at 8 p.m. Beer, wine and appetizers will be served. Tickets cost \$35. Winthrop University and USC's Institute for African American Research are also sponsors of the event.

Kwame Dawes is the author of 13 books of poetry, as well as books of fiction, nonfiction and drama. Among his awards are the Forward Poetry Prize for Best First Collection, the Hollis Summers Poetry Prize by the Ohio University Press, and a Pushcart Prize. He also is an actor, producer, storyteller, and broadcaster and was lead singer in a reggae band. His collection "Hope's Hospice" will be published by Peepal Tree Press in Spring 2009. Dawes is distinguished poet in residence at the University of South Carolina; he directs the S.C. Poetry Initiative and the USC Arts Institute. Dawes, who was born in Ghana and grew up in Jamaica, also is the programming director of the Calabash International Literary Festival, which takes place each May in Jamaica. Recently, he was commissioned by The State newspaper to write a poem commemorating the inauguration of Barack Obama. Read the poem at <http://www.thestate.com/living/story/656568.html>.

Susan Ludvigson, professor emeritus at Winthrop University, has published nine collections of poems, eight with Louisiana State University Press. The most recent is "Escaping the House of Certainty" (2006). She also is on the faculty of the Ranier Writing Workshop, a low-residency MFA program at Pacific Lutheran University in Tacoma, Washington. Among her many honors are National Endowment for the Arts, Guggenheim, Fulbright and Rockefeller/Bellagio fellowships. Ludvigson has represented the United States at writers' congresses in Canada, Belgium, France and the former Yugoslavia; the Library of Congress has recorded her poems for its archive. In Fall 2009, she will be writer in residence at Appalachian State University in Boone, N.C.

Carrie Allen McCray Nickens, who died July 25, 2008 at age 95, worked as a social worker and teacher in New York and was honored as a United Negro College Fund teacher of the year. She gained recognition as a writer later in life, beginning to publish poems in the 1980s. "Piece of Time," her first poetry collection, was published in 1993. She is best known for "Freedom's Child: The Life of a Confederate General's Black Daughter." The nonfiction account of the life of her mother, Mary Rice Hayes Allen, was published in 1998 by Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill. Nickens' mother, an educator and activist, was the child of a former slave and a Confederate general. Among Nickens' last works was "Ota Benga Under My Mother's Roof." Ota Benga, an African pygmy caged and displayed in 1906 in the Bronx Zoo's Monkey House, lived with her family for two years before his death.

During the induction ceremony Jim Burns, associate dean of the South Carolina Honors College at USC, will speak about Kwame Dawes; Libby Bernardin, a poet and retired USC instructor, will speak about Susan Ludvigson; and Dianne Johnson, an English professor at USC and author of children's literature, will speak about Carrie Allen McCray Nickens.

Founded at Anderson College in 1986, the South Carolina Academy of Authors identifies and recognizes the state's distinguished writers, living and deceased. In 2008, the academy honored James Oliver Rigney Jr. of Charleston, a world renowned fantasy author who used the pen name Robert Jordan. He was the 47th inductee. Other writers honored by the Academy include James Dickey, Pat Conroy, Josephine Humphreys, and John Jakes.

The Academy's annual induction ceremonies honor writers selected by its board of governors. The Academy also underwrites a program of literary fellowships and sponsors readings. The board of governors is working on ways to support the creation of county literary history projects, book club reading programs and book club presentations on SC writers.

Tickets are available by contacting Nicholas Meriwether at the South Caroliniana Library, meriwetn@mailbox.sc.edu. Please make your reservations in advance; tickets will not be sold at the door. Checks may be made payable to the SC Academy of Authors and mailed to Nicholas Meriwether, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC 29208.

Those wishing to support the Academy, a nonprofit, tax-exempt organization, may make a donation as a supporter, \$10-\$75; a sustainer, \$100-\$200; a patron, \$300-\$500; a sponsor, \$600-\$800, or a partner, \$1,000 or more. Donations may be directed to unrestricted funding of the Academy's projects or to the Memorial Endowment Fund.

